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Rupert Hine

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A

nyone who has spent more than two decades laboring in ill-lit studios with ill-tempered artists to produce 80-odd albums can be forgiven for looking a bit haggard. Yet Rupert Hine shows not the least sign of wear. What's most striking about him, as he sits on a noisy terrace in central London's Bayswater area, is the infectious enthusiasm with which he discusses his trade. At times he seems like the proverbial kid in a toy shop. It's an analogy he himself likes using, but with a rather different meaning.

"It's fantastic what you can do with modern keyboards and studio technology," he says. "I don't want to sound negative about it. It *is* brilliant. The technology is stunning and exciting, and it makes it possible for you to achieve anything you want on a very moderate budget. The problem is that character and individuality are disappearing from music. We're all like five-year-old kids locked in this dream toy shop, in huge danger of not seeing the wood for the trees anymore."

Mixed metaphors aside, here speaks a man who has used computer technology and keyboards to such effect that Mick Jagger once asked him who was in the rhythm section on Tina Turner's "Better Be Good to Me." Little did Mick realize that Hine had not only produced that track, but had played and programmed the lot, barring the guitars. If you can fool a roots-oriented rocker like Mick Jagger, you must have something going for you.

As a producer, songwriter, keyboard player, and singer, Hine has been extraordinarily prolific since he was first captured on vinyl in the late '60s. He recorded two solo albums on Purple Records

BY PAUL TINGEN

ILLUSTRATION: SALIM YAQUAB

Rupert Hine

in the early '70s, then went on to produce the likes of Kevin Ayers, Yvonne Elliman, and Camel. He returned to singing and producing his own music in the late '70s with the band Quantum Jump. In the early '80s, he released three solo albums, followed later by two records with his band Thinkman.

It was also during the '80s that Hine's producing career took off when he worked with such artists as Tina Turner, Howard Jones, Bob Geldof, Saga, and more recently Stevie Nicks and Rush. Now there's a new

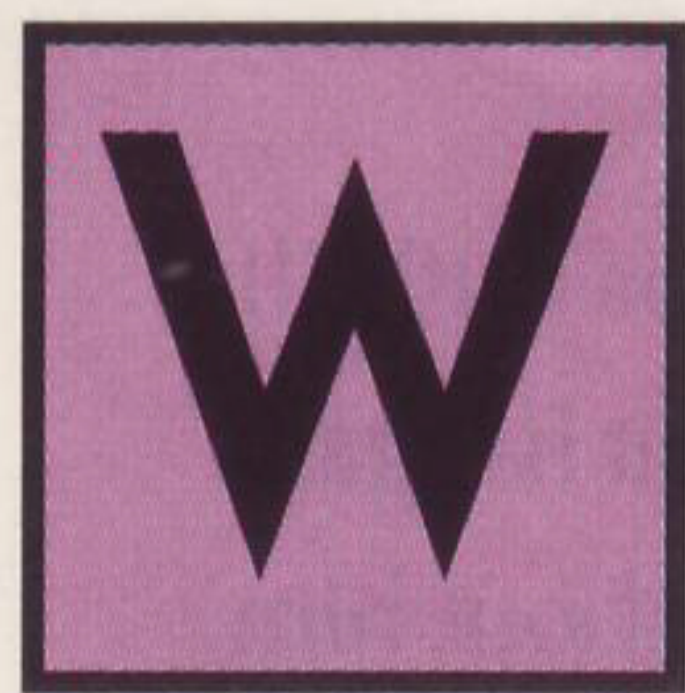
Hine-produced Rush album, *Roll the Bones*, and soon to be released is his first solo album since 1983, tentatively scheduled for late this year or early in '92 and titled *The Deep End*.

Enthusiastic and youthful as he appears, this English rock survivor has been tempered a bit by time. Gone is the dark, brooding, almost *angst*-ridden image he used to portray. Today his hair is a curious mixture of white and gray, with some touches of beige. His face is as long and angular as ever, but the eyes have mellowed and the smile broadened.

In conversation, he keeps steering back to what matters most to him today—which is exactly what mattered most in years past. The technology of music, the sounds, the

studios, the computers and keyboards, they're all very interesting, but he is quick to remind his listeners that they're only tools. "What has to be the primary point of music is to alter someone's emotional and mental state," he insists. "If people are in exactly the same state at the end of your piece of music as they were at the beginning, then the whole thing has been meaningless. You have to think about what it is that you want to communicate, even before you start recording. In my opinion, that's not often done. Ninety-five percent of the people simply press buttons in trial and error, rather than stop to think about what they really want to achieve. Computer and keyboard technology too often leads the way, because it's so enticing. It's so easy to get sidetracked

ONE WORLD



Without doubt, the most extraordinary project on Rupert Hine's resumé is *One World One Voice*.

Though not yet available in the States, it's a milestone in recording history, packed with enough statistical power to warrant inclusion in the *Guinness Book of Records*: 292 musicians from 16 countries contributed to its making. The team that put the project together travelled 44,964 air miles in 62 days, filling 36,000 feet of 2" multitrack tape, 48,000 feet of 1" multitrack tape, 110 DAT cassettes, and 100 audio cassettes.

But more important than numbers is the spirit of *One World One Voice*. It emerged from an idea by Kevin Godley (formerly of 10cc and now one of the world's foremost video directors) to create a "chain tape" with musicians from all over the world contributing. The chain ended last year with an international week of television programs devoted to tackling the environmental and poverty crises threatening the survival of many species on the planet, including ours.

The overriding theme of the week was to show that we are all in this world together, that we have a choice between one world and no world at all. Peter Gabriel, one of the contributors, put it this way: "Pollution doesn't respect national and political boundaries. We can be certain that what we do in one country will have lasting and dramatic effects on people in other countries. The only thing I know that spreads as fast as pollution is music. So in the same way that the musicians in the *One World One Voice* project have come together in a spirit of good faith with absolutely no idea in advance of how we would work together, governments must come together if they are really going to meet the challenge of

righting environmental wrongs head-on."

Godley's idea of a chain tape was adopted by the BBC, the producers of the program, who employed Rupert Hine as musical director and Godley as video director for this "world symphony." *One World One Voice* was broadcast to an audience of one billion people in 20 nations in late May 1990. Contributing artists included Suzanne Vega, David Gilmour, Robbie Robertson, Howard Jones, Laurie Anderson, Eddy Grant, Bob Geldof, Chrissie Hynde, and a host of performers from around the globe—Milton Nascimento, Ray Lema, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Geoffrey Oryema, Remmy Ongala, and others.

It all began with a backing track that Sting prepared with Afrika Bambaataa. "We started in New York on February 28," Hine remembers, "doing overdubs to the piece with several rap artists, Steve Stevens [guitarist with Michael Jackson], and others. Although Kevin Godley's original idea was for all artists to overdub to Sting's backing tape, we quickly realized that would severely limit people's musical expressions. So I suggested that we allow people to contribute in a horizontal, as well as in a linear, way—horizontal meaning overdubbing to what's already on tape, and linear meaning an extension to the piece either at the front or the back."

The team worked under immense time pressure to get the music and visuals ready for the May broadcast. There wasn't enough notice to prepare or schedule any sessions in advance, so the process was improvised, with artists sometimes approached the day before they recorded. "There was no *modus operandi*," Hine says. "Planning was a word that simply didn't exist. Things changed all the time."

To add to their hectic schedule, Hine and Godley decided to travel to the artists rather than have the artists come to them. This proved necessary in acquiring contributions from world music artists hidden in places as far away as Tanzania or Rio de Janeiro, and also helped Western artists, who only had to take off a few hours from their recording schedules to add something to the chain tape. Several artists invested more than their share of time and energy: Lou Reed,

by all these flashing lights and buzzers saying, 'Me, me, me! Try me! Try me!' You can get lost, even before you've barely started."

This is the main reason why Hine sold his Atari computer and its assorted software a couple of years ago, and has since worked with a dedicated sequencer, an Akai MPC-60, as his main workstation. "I don't like staring into a VDU [video display unit] screen," he explains, "because that removes me from my own mental picture. When I'm playing keyboards, I always stand up. I move about and look into middle space for most of the time. I do everything predominantly intuitively, with the tiniest glances to know where I am on the synth, or to twiddle a knob. For me, sitting in front of a screen is very restrictive. It's fiddly. I have

to look at these tiny drop-down menus and use a mouse to change operators. I'm forced into the parameters of the software and have to think about what I'm doing all the time. I hate it."

For Hine, computer-based work is "editorial" in nature, while the more tactile approach to making music is, by contrast, "creative." "When I'm in a creative mode, I want

technology to get in the way as little as possible," he points out. "Basically, I want to be able to simply press 'record,' whether it's on a sequencer or a tape machine, and go. During editorial mode, however, computer technology is an absolute blessing. I use the MPC-60 primarily as an editorial and arranging tool. I write songs mostly by free-flow playing with either a piano-type sound or

Salif Keita, Johnny Clegg, Peter Gabriel, Howard Jones, Clannad, and the Gipsy Kings prepared entire backing pieces as linear extensions, while leaving enough room for "horizontal" contributions from the likes of Courtney Pine, Egberto Gismonti, Wayne Shorter, and Ryuichi Sakamoto, often improvised on the spot on first hearing.

The end result left Hine with the daunting task of having to sift through and puzzle together hundreds of hours of performances. And on-location recording meant that these performances were captured on a great variety of formats with no time code to keep it all together. Hine recounts, with a grin, that much of the on-site recording was done by engineer Stephen Tayler on four Sony TCD-D10 Pro DAT recorders—eight-track digital without synchronization!

"On returning to London at the end of the project, we loaded all the performances onto four 32-track digital tapes," he continues. "With the help of the NED Direct-To-Disk system, we gave performances starting points and locked them to SMPTE. We were, of course, worried about drift, but someone assured us that the DAT machines were 100% reliable and didn't drift. We prayed that he was right—and he was. The Sony DATs didn't even drift one millisecond after five minutes of play! In fact, we only had drifting problems with some of the analog reel-to-reel tapes, which we had to drop in several times to keep in sync."

Hine and Tayler also carried a Tascam 238 eight-track cassette recorder, plus a 16-channel Yamaha MV1602 mixer with a Yamaha FX500 multi-effects processor. The microphones were Sony ECM M55 and 979 and Crown Sass-P PZM—all stereo mikes—and two Shure SM58s. The idea of the Tascam eight-track and the Yamaha mixer was to have a portable sketchbook facility, to see whether bits

and pieces fitted together while on location or traveling.

"Every time we sat on a plane, I was going through loads and loads of notes," Hine recalls, "comparing keys and tempos and moods, constantly shuffling the cards and finding two or three pieces that would work well together, or sections where I needed more cover. I had to then remember to pick up that cover somewhere on the planet."

One of Hine's and Godley's main concerns was to make sure that the final product was musically coherent. Both were aware of the danger of ending up with yet another well-meant charity project that boiled down to snippets of inspiration within an overall disjointed and mediocre context. Luckily, the results were far from mediocre. With the improvised and chaotic character of the project translating as energy and spontaneity, *One World One Voice* is enlivened by its many unexpected and rousing collaborations. Where else can you hear Johnny Clegg with Eddy Grant, or Peter Gabriel with Wayne Shorter and Ryuichi Sakamoto, or Clannad with Laurie Anderson? More than a successful experiment, more even than a noble gesture, this product of Hine's and Godley's vision is the jam session of the year. ■



Steve Tayler, Sting, and Rupert Hine at Sting's recording session for *One World*.

Rupert Hine

a sustained sound. Once the general shape of the song takes form, I bring in the MPC-60—my friendly arranger—and start writing in parts with temporary sounds. That usually means that I only determine the envelope—just the shape of the note. At that state, I don't worry too much about color or texture."

Once he has the basic structure of his arrangements laid out, Hine will transfer the

MPC-60 sequences onto tape. These parts will then be replaced one by one, either by session musicians—mainly drummers and guitarists—or by himself. "I'll gang up all my synthesizers, layer and program sounds, make my choices, and play the finished part directly to tape. Once a finished part is on tape, it's like a contract. I've done a deal with that sound. Making commitments at the right moment is important. I've seen people endlessly changing things, and ending up with results worse than before. They may achieve perfection, but it's often devoid of spontaneity and human feel, of any kind of individuality. It's the joy and also the problem with sequencers and computers that you can end-

lessly tweak things."

Hine's method of playing keyboard parts straight to tape ties in with his liking for the MPC-60. "Like the Linn 9000, and to a lesser degree the little Alesis MMT-8, it's laid out as a tape recorder, which is a tried and tested way of recording. What you're doing and where you are is always obvious, and very visual. You don't have to think about it."

This appreciation for functional design underlies Hine's scathing opinion of today's computers. "It's absolutely incredible," he fumes, "that it's only been very recently that a company has come up with a more human interface between man and computer for recording. I'm talking about JL Cooper's CS-1, a hardware box with tape transport controls like 'play' and 'record,' which you connect to your computer. I've been asking for years for computer hardware with big chunky buttons that you can hit instinctively in the middle of recording, rather than these ludicrous computer peripherals like QWERTY keyboards and the mouse."

And even, for that matter, the piano-style keyboard itself. "Many of them are hopelessly unergonomic. Take the Roland D-70. It's a great machine, with many wonderful sounds and possibilities, but it's infuriatingly badly designed. It's just not designed for human beings."

Hine's fury is directed at the digital "pages" and soft key systems that (dis)grace so many modern keyboards. These features, he insists, make changing "essential" parameters too time-consuming and slow down the creative flow. "I've been moaning about this for years, and we've now finally seen a machine on the market which does what I, and many people with me, have been asking for: the Roland JD-800. You want to simply go 'More attack, more release, change the tuning a little bit, knock off the chorus,' and play! On the equivalent analog machines of ten years ago you could do those things in less time than it takes to say them."

All this talk about expedience in sound design and performance betrays the fact that lack of time is a real problem for Hine. The pressures of being one of the world's most in-demand producers have forced him to pursue a more efficient approach in making his own music. As a result, he has shifted away from the wild sound-and-form experiments that characterized his work in the early '80s, and has begun focusing more fully on composing. Here, too, he has scored his share of bull's eyes. Tina Turner sang several of his songs (always co-written with lyricist Jeannette Ostoj), including "Break Every Rule" and "I Might Have Been a Queen." Dusty Springfield had a hit in the U.K. with "Arrested by You." Wilson Phillips

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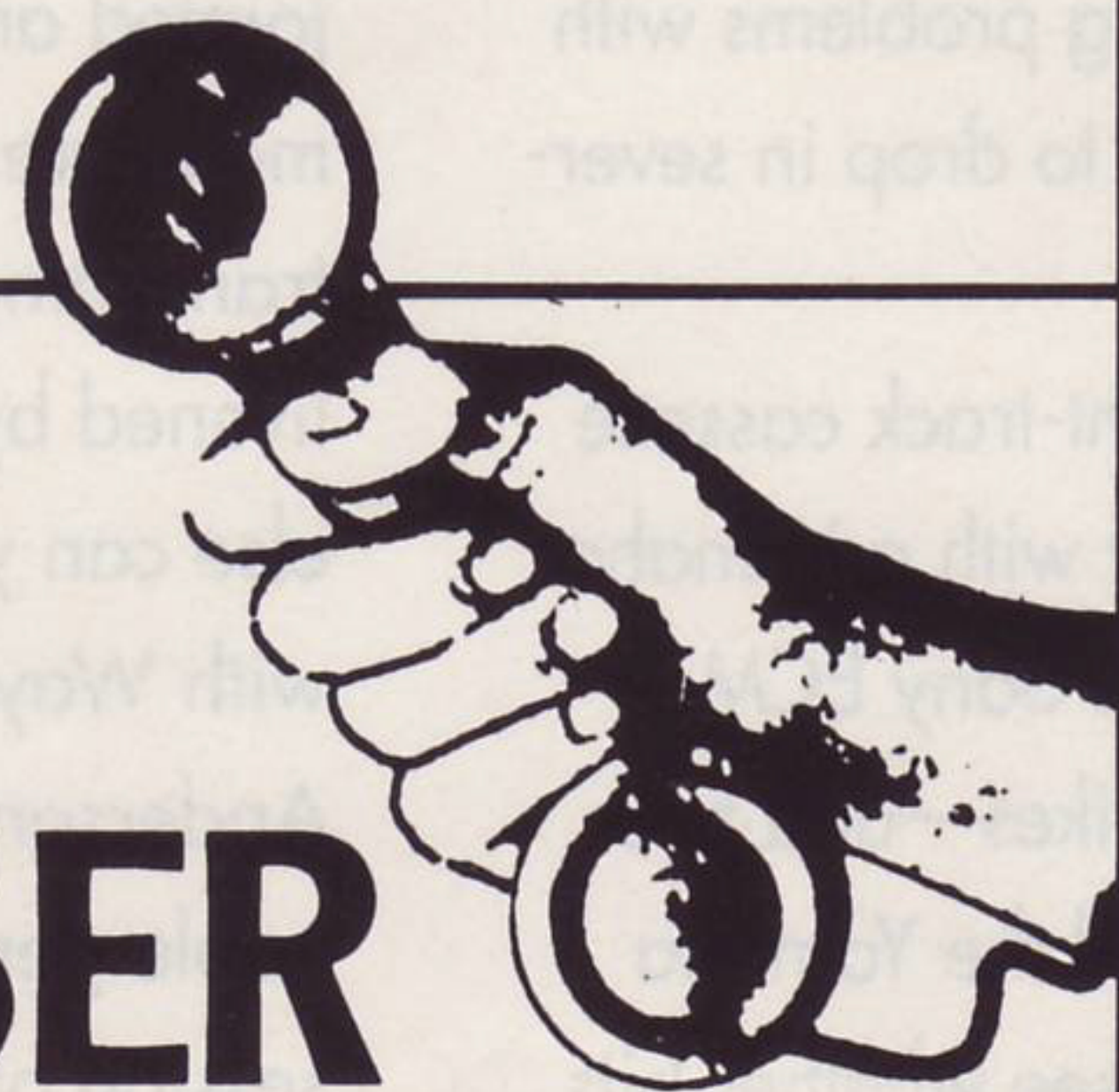
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RUPERT HINE: A SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

AS LEADER:

Immunity, A&M.
Pick Up a Bone, Purple.
Unfinished Picture, A&M.
Waving Not Drowning, A&M.
Wildest Wish to Fly, A&M.

WITH OTHER ARTISTS:

Action Replay (w. Howard Jones), Elektra.
Barracuda (w. Quantum Jump), Electric U.K.

Better Off Dead (w. Thinkman), A&M.
Burning (w. Wildlife), Chrysalis U.K.
Confessions of Dr. Dream (w. Kevin Ayers), Island U.K.
For Girls Who Go Plump in the Night (w. Caravan), London.
I Can See Your House from Here (w. Camel), Arista.
Man on the Line (w. Chris De Burgh), A&M.
1980 The Choice is Yours (Members), Virgin U.K.

Other Side of the Mirror (w. Stevie Nicks), Modern (9111 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069).
Presto (w. Rush), Atlantic.
Private Dancer (w. Tina Turner), Capitol.
Quantum Jump (w. Quantum Jump), Electric U.K.
Sunset Wading (w. John G. Perry), Decca U.K.
Wise After the Event (w. Anthony Phillips), Passport.

recorded his "Eyes Like Twins," which has also been covered by Cyndi Lauper and Barbra Streisand in two unreleased performances. Hine's own version will appear on his forthcoming solo album.

This project, with the first 12-bar blues recorded by Hine since "Let It Rain" in the early '70s and even some harmonica solos, marks a departure from the anarchic style of his early '80s albums. On *Immunity*, for instance, he used mainly treated or prepared instruments, such as piano and Hohner Clavinet, with a bit of Sequential Prophet-5, Minimoog, and percussion tape loops.

"That era was great fun," Hine recalls. "Steve [Tayler, his engineer and recording partner for the past 11 years] and I felt that we were an R&D department for interesting ways of recording. Sonically, there was still a lot that you couldn't do, so we had to constantly invent things to achieve our aims. It was very adventurous. But today we have the equipment to create any sound your imagination can dream of in ten seconds. So the sound exploration side of recording doesn't really exist in the same way anymore. That subject bores me now. New and different sounds are everywhere."

This is not to say that Hine has abandoned the unusual. Many of the songs on *The Deep End* manage to fall into traditional structures, yet retain idiosyncratic qualities, and there are enough quirks in his arrangements and sounds to prick your ears. For example, he relies on the Super Bass patch on his Yamaha DX7II for several of the album's bass sounds. "Most people have dismissed that sound as hopelessly unrealistic and ridiculous," he admits. "But they miss the point. It's not about how realistic things sound in isolation."

For years, in fact, Hine has gone on the record about the dangers of using overly glossy sounds, when sounds that are rougher—even ugly—on their own might ac-

archlute
 bassoon and
 contrabassoon

celesta
 cello solo:
 sustained, with
 vibrato; pizzicato;
 martelé

clarinets: b flat,
 e flat, bass clarinet,
 contrabass clarinet

cornett: treble

crumhorns: bass,
 alto, soprano

double bass solo:
 sustained, little
 vibrato; pizzicato;
 martelé

English horn
 flute, piccolo, alto
 flute and bass flute:
 with and without
 vibrato;
 flutertongued
 (flute only)

French horn:
 with and without
 mute

guitar (classical):
 normal position,
 sul tasto,
 harmonics, sul
 ponticello, panned

harp: single notes
 and harmonics

harpsichord (four
 variations)

oboes:
 oboe, Baroque oboe

organ: cornets,
 flutes, pedals,
 plenum, prinzipal,
 reeds

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 bells, alpenglocken,
 bamboo chimes, bass
 drum, bongos, brake
 drum, cabasa,
 castenets, cencerros,
 Chinese gong, claves,
 conga, crotales, cuica,
 cymbals, finger
 cymbals, glockenspiel,
 gongs, ice bells, log
 drums, maracas,
 marching snare,
 marimba, mark-tree,
 military drum,
 snare drum, temple
 blocks, ratchet, sleigh
 bells, tambourine,
 temple blocks,
 timbales, tom-toms,
 triangles, tubular
 bells, tumba,
 tympani, vibraphone,
 waterphones, whip,
 wood blocks,
 xylophone

piano (Steinway
 grands, 8 and 16
 mb): straight,
 pedalled, harmonics,
 plucked strings

recorders: Renaissance
 and Baroque

shawm: alto

trombones: bass, alto,
 tenor; muted tenor

trumpets: c trumpet,
 Bach trumpet

tuba

viols: bass and treble

viola solo: sustained,
 with and without
 vibrato; pizzicato;
 martelé

violin solo: sustained,
 with and without
 vibrato; pizzicato;
 harmonics; martelé

violin ensemble:
 sustained, with and
 without vibrato;
 pizzicato; martelé;
 harmonics

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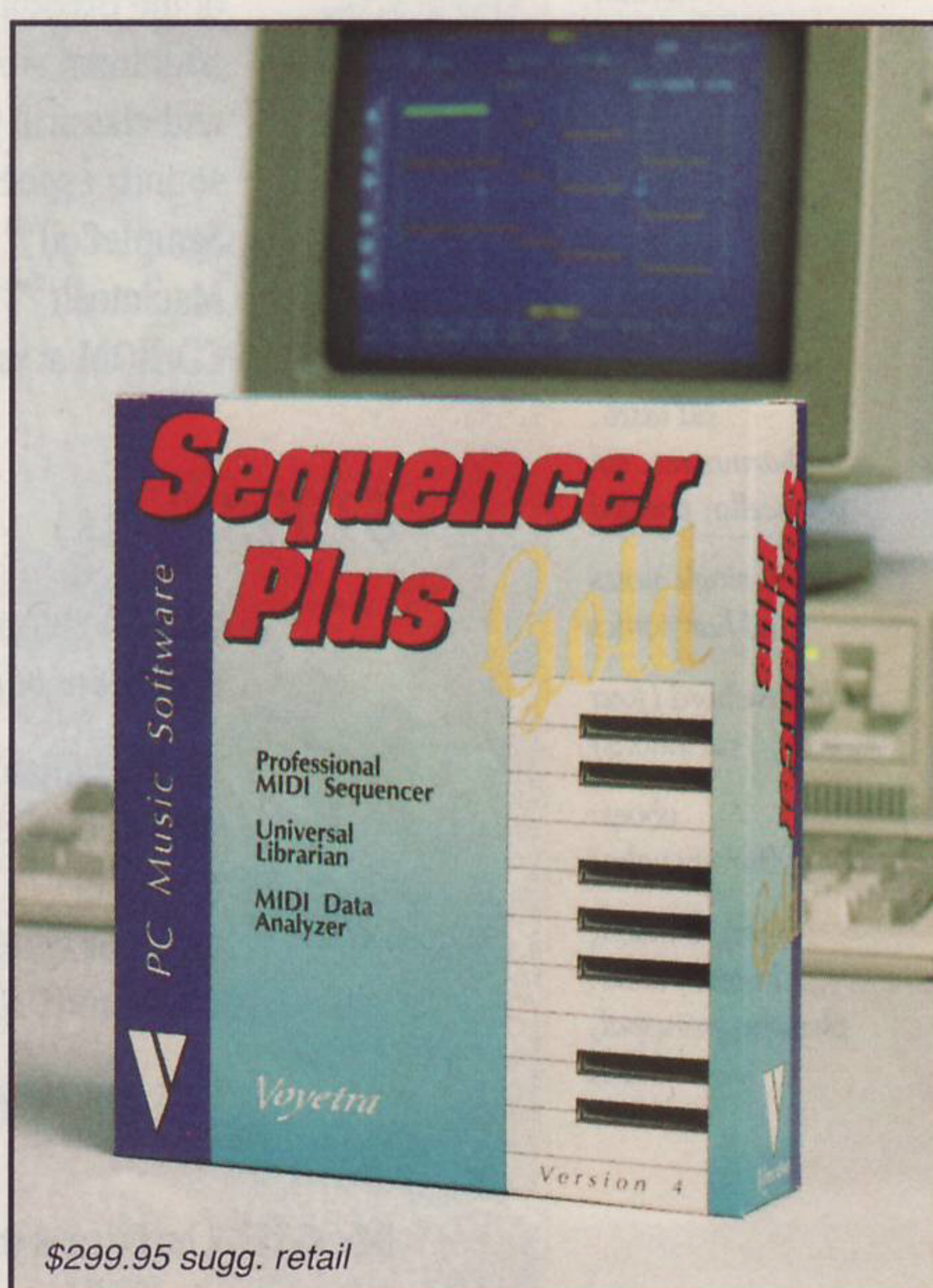
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Rupert Hine

tually work well in context. He spends a lot of his time, both while producing other people's albums and working on his own, stripping chorus and reverb from sounds because "they're too tarty, too dressed to kill. They take up too much audio space." He slightly modified the DX7II Super Bass patch to make it "alive to velocity and pressure. It doesn't sound like a continuous keyboard sound. It has a lot of the flexibility and variance that you get from a real bass. It's violent and hyperactive, and if you want that, it's great." Other bass sounds he uses include samples in the E-mu Emulator II and variations on the Round Wound sound in the Wavestation, usually layered together.

Hine's move away from extreme experimentation has turned him into a more conservative keyboard player. On the two Rush albums that he has produced, *Presto* and the new *Roll the Bones*, his playing fits into conventional melodic and harmonic molds. "I do quite a bit of keyboard playing on the Rush albums. Geddy Lee [the group's bassist, vocalist, and main composer] writes with keyboards but doesn't claim to be a player. He sequences the keyboard parts on their demos. I wrote a lot of new keyboard parts, but we also kept some of Geddy's parts, which I then replayed live because everything on a Rush album is played live; you don't want some sequenced keyboard parts sticking out like a sore thumb.

"We worked on this album by passing the band's demos straight onto the multi-track because we'd done all the arrangements during pre-production. Next, we replaced things one by one—first Neil Peart's drums, then Geddy's bass, and in the end the keyboards and Alex Lifeson's guitar parts. So when I played the keyboard overdubs, I could lock in with the feel of the live rhythm section."

Hine explains that his Rush sessions differed in crucial ways from his work with Tina Turner and Stevie Nicks. With the latter two, he arranged, wrote, and played a lot of the music. With Rush, his main function as a producer is to give them feedback on their demos. "They want me to criticize all aspects—the songwriting, the arrangements, anything. But an amazing amount of what they put on their demos is absolutely fine; we keep a lot of it. I'm not changing near enough of their stuff to warrant the idea of being called their producer. In fact, I told them after the first album

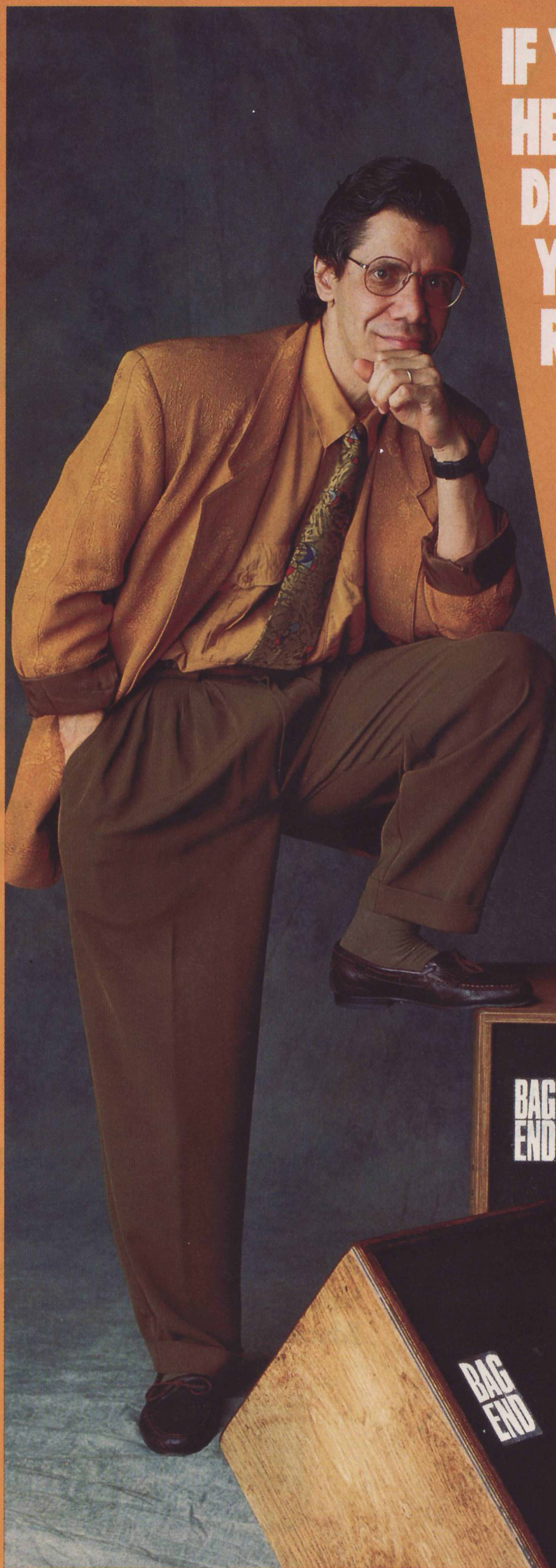
we did that they were under-using me as a producer. But they answered, and rightly so, 'It's what we need, not what you can do, that's important to us. And our needs were fulfilled by what you did.'"

For Hine, the attraction of working with Rush is that "they've been going for almost twenty years now. *Roll the Bones* is their 18th album, and they're still writing their own kind of music. They reach a very large audience without the aid of singles, without all those aspects of radio and marketing. That's very unusual. It's a pleasure to work with a group that doesn't have those kinds of pressures and restrictions. Also, they're so idiosyncratically themselves. Their arrangements, Geddy's voice, Neil's drums, Alex's guitar playing are all very recognizable. They're like stamps, or logos."

These observations take Hine back to his favorite gripe of how so little modern music has an instantly recognizable sound. The blandness of so much of today's high-tech music, he muses, is exemplified in the fact that there are really no keyboard players today who are musically recognizable in the way that many guitar players are. "Part of the reason for that is that keyboard players have so many sounds at their disposal. I did a session for Bob Geldof's album with Eric Clapton. Clapton turned up with one guitar, plugged it in, and that was it. Yet keyboard players arrive at sessions with stacks and stacks of equipment, and use hundreds of sounds. One way of being recognizable as a keyboard player is to consciously limit yourself to using only a few sounds as your main sounds—perhaps only one or two. When you think of Stevie Wonder in the '70s, you hear his Clavinet playing and a very particular Rhodes sound that he had. But all I hear today is a jungle of Japanese presets."

So what's a keyboard player to do? Hine sighs. "Well, one sign of light is an album recently released on Virgin by a U.K. rap group called Massive. It's essentially drum machines and keyboards, but their stuff is so minimal, so bare, that it comes across as very identifiable and therefore communicative. They haven't been seduced by all those glamorous sounds and boxes. They've stopped at exactly the right point."

"So, apart from this idea of using only a few sounds, which might not be feasible for everybody, I think it's very much a matter of continuously going back to your starting point. Keep asking yourself, 'What is it that I want to communicate?' Stay aware of the basic song, the basic structure, the real essence and rudiments of what you're trying to do. And remember that less tends to be better than more." ■



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